THE FOURTH DAY.

Friday, the 7th March, 1930:

The Assembly met again at 11-30 A. M. on the 7th March 1930. the Dewn presiding.

41, Necessity for a separate staff co-ordinated with the Agricultural Department to deal with, develop and extend irrigation works in the State.

MR. P. K. MATTHEW (*Kunnatnad taluk, Group II*) said that agriculture had been the main occupation of the people of the state for ages but lately the tendency of modern educated youths to leave agriculture to the poor, the ignorant and the unintelligent was slowly dragging the State to a financial calamity of which the discontent on account of unemployment was only a fore-taste. It was therefore highly imperative to develop the agricultural resources of the State. The Agricultural Department had not done much in that direction. Scattered throughout the State there were a large number of tanks, *chiras*, channels and *todus* which were of the utmost importance and utility to the agriculturists in times past, but which, owing to utter neglect in their proper maintenance, had become unfit to serve their purpose. The main reason was the want of a proper agency to attend to their maintenance. It was too much to expect the poor adjoining land-owners to be vigilant. In course of time, such neglected tanks, etc, were applied for by, and registered in the names of, interested people, despite the protests of the general public and in utter disregard of their usefulness for agricultural purposes. There were instances in which *punja* lands were converted into *mundakan* lands owing to the assignment or silting up of irrigation channels. The proceedings taken against the occupants were not effective. Even if the occupants were evicted, the channels or tanks, as the case may be, were not restored to their original condition. No doubt, the Government were aware of the evils and as a result had appointed a Section Officer in each P. W. Sub-Division to be in charge of irrigation works. But the arrangement was defective in the following respects, *viz.*:—

(1) A Section Officer could not realise the importance of the work.

(2) The Executive Engineer who should control the Section Officer had not got adequate time to attend to the work in addition to his regular work relating to buildings and communications. That was one of the main reasons why the sanctioned amounts for improvements of irrigation works were not wholly spent.

(3) Irrigation work in the whole State could not be dealt with in a comprehensive way under the present arrangement.

With view to remove the above defects, the member made the following suggestions:—

(1) A separate department should be organised for controlling

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irrigation works in the whole State and placed under an officer of the status of an Executive Engineer.

(2) A considerable portion of the annual budget allotments for the Public Works Department should be diverted for improvement of irrigation works.

(3) The department dealing with irrigation works should be co-ordinated with the Agricultural Department.

Under a carefully-planned irrigation system, the agriculture of the State should never suffer on account of either scanty or heavy rainfall. The committee that was in contemplation should have on it members who possessed an intimate knowledge of the country and its irrigational needs.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Matthew, in the first part of your representation you have delineated certain evils which have been appreciated by the Government too, and, as a result of that appreciation, Government are immediately appointing a committee which will investigate the whole question. As you say, the evil is not likely to be completely eradicated by any such action alone, because no national industry can properly develop unless it has the advantage of engaging the intelligence of the country in it. As you said, agriculture has now been relegated mostly as a profession fit only for those who have not been educated on modern lines. Persons who have had modern high school or collegiate education consider themselves superior to the practice of agriculture. As long as that mentality continues among our educated people, it is not likely that any attempts made by the Government to improve irrigational facilities would, by themselves, be sufficient to advance the interests of agriculture. It is hoped that before long the young educated people of our country will appreciate the folly of the idea that agriculture is beneath their dignity. They will appreciate, let us trust, that there is no profession nobler than that of creating food for the people of the country. Once the dignity of agriculture is understood by our educated people, I believe that the bad days of agriculture will end and agriculture will advance until the paddy lands cultivated in Travancore will be more than sufficient to meet the food needs of the country.

I shall be glad to send your suggestions to the Irrigation Committee, if you will hand over your representation to the Chief Secretary.

42. The Cheruvalli-Vellanadi road.

MR. M. R. COGHLAN (*Mundakayam Planters' Association*) said that it was hardly necessary for him to reiterate the reasons why the construction of the road was essential in the planting district as they had already been explained on previous occasions. When, two years before, the same subject was pressed at the Assembly, the then Dewan said that an estimate had been called for and that, as soon as it was ready, the matter would be taken up. In December 1929, the Planters' Association was also informed that the investigation had been completed.

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